

Junior *Practice with Purpose*

Athlete

Even the best athletes weren't born great at sports: They had to practice with purpose. Have fun with these activities as you learn to improve a skill – not matter what track, court, rink, pool, slope, or field you like to play. Game on!

Steps

1. Decide on your goal
2. Increase your endurance
3. Build up your strength
4. Drill for skill
5. Practice, practice, practice!

Purpose

When I've earned this badge, I'll know how to set a sports goal and practice to achieve it.

A great athlete is not born; a great athlete makes herself into one by hard work.

-Girl Scout Handbook, 1940

Every step has three choices. Do ONE choice to complete each step. Inspired? Do more.

Tips Before Takeoff

- In this badge, you'll decide on a goal in step 1, make a plan to reach it in steps 2 - 4, and, then, put your plan into action for one month in step 5.
- If you're working on this badge with other Juniors, you could all choose goals in the same sport so you can work together. Every girl should pick her own skill that she wants to improve.
- If you know a Girl Scout Ambassador completing her Coaching badge, she needs to help a group of at least two girls practice for one month towards a sports goal. She might love to assist you with this badge!
- Keep a sports diary during this badge. It will help you track your progress and remember your purpose. You can write in it after each of your practices.

Possible Goals

- Swim a lap of freestyle faster than I can now
- Hit more forehand shots in bounds in tennis
- Be able to do 100 push-ups in row
- Run a mile in less time
- Jump rope for 10 minutes straight
- Complete a downhill ski race in less time
- Perform two new gymnastics move
- Pitch a fastball
- Do three new yoga poses with ease
- Hit the ball more often when I'm at bat
- Make three baskets in a row from the free-throw line
- Score a goal in hockey two games in a row.

Step 1 Decide on your goal

It helps to have an exact goal so you can focus when things get tough – and so you'll know when to celebrate reaching it! In this step, decide on a skill to practice with purpose. (Ideas in the box might help.)

Then, visit one of the people to get advice on choosing a goal. Share your experience in the sport and maybe do some drills so they can help you pick a skill to improve. Last, be sure to ask the person for their top 10 practice tips, and write them in your sports diary or make a poster to inspire you.

CHOOSE ONE:

Ask a coach for advice. Talk with a coach for your sport – your own coach if you already play, or a coach from your school, a middle or high school team, or a local youth league.

OR

Speak to a trainer at a gym or community center. Who are the experts in your sport in your area? If you already know some of them, are there other experts who don't know your game as well and can help you improve in different ways?

OR

Talk with a physical education or gym teacher at your school. They probably know a lot about different kinds of sports!

Tip: Ask this person if they will advise you on your choices in steps 2 – 4!

Warm Up and Cool Down

With any activity, you need to warm up and stretch before you start, and, then, cool down afterward. Warming up your muscles with stretches before an activity helps improve your range of motion and prevents injuries. Cooling down with some stretches will keep you from getting so sore the next day. Ask the sports expert you speak to for some good stretches to do before and after your workouts.

Inspiring Athletes

Bethany Hamilton

Bethany was born into a family of surfers in Kauai, Hawaii. She had a knack for surfing from an early age and began winning competitions when she was eight years old. In 2003, Bethany was attacked by a shark. Her left arm was torn off just below her shoulder. Bethany was determined to get back on her surfboard. She taught herself how to surf with one arm and went back to surfing competitively. In 2004, she won the ESPY (Excellency in Sports Performance Yearly) Award for Best Comeback Athlete.

Diana Golden

Diana was born in Massachusetts and started skiing when she was five years old. When she was 12, she lost a leg to bone cancer. Right after her surgery, Diana asked the doctors if she would be able to ski again. She was back on the slopes in six months. Diana later won many competitions as part of the U.S. Disabled Ski Team. She, also, won two gold medals at the Paralympic Games.

Kerri Morgan

Kerri was only one year old when a virus attacked her spinal cord, leaving her permanently impaired from the chest down. After graduating from college, she began playing quadriplegic rugby. The sport, which was the subject of a documentary called Murderball, is co-ed – but few women every play. In 2009, she became the first female member of the U.S. quadriplegic rugby team.

Jean Driscoll

Jean was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, with a disease called spina bifida that made her unable to walk. When she was 15, she began using a wheelchair – and fell in love with wheelchair sports. She was recruited by the University of Illinois to play wheelchair basketball for them, and, also, joined the school's wheelchair track and field team. She won the Boston Marathon in 1990, and, then, followed it with seven more wins. She was the first eight-time winner of the marathon.

Workout Words

CARDIOVASCULAR means “relating to the heart.” Cardiovascular exercises help keep your heart pumping and your heart rate up, which burns calories to keep you fit and healthy.

AEROBIC EXERCISE is anything that increases your heart rate and breathing, improving cardiovascular fitness.

Step 2 Increase your endurance

In any sport, athletes need to keep going even when they think they can't – that's endurance. You need endurance to run around all the bases in baseball or to keep playing a long match in tennis.

Practice helps you build endurance. The first time you run, you might be able to go for 20 minutes, and pushing it to 25 will feel hard. But the magic of endurance is that the next time you run 25 minutes, it can seem easier! Choose the endurance activity that will help with your goal, and make it part of the routine you'll practice in step 5.

CHOOSE ONE:

Run! You might try sprint trials: Time yourself running to a certain point and back. Write down your first time in your sports diary, and try to improve on it every time you practice. Being able to run in short, fast bursts helps with any sport that requires cardiovascular endurance. Or, you could build a course using cones, balls, or other objects to make obstacles you have to jump over, go around, or even carry. Run through the course and write down everyone's time. See if you can improve on it during your month of practice. This kind of work helps with agility – that's changing direction or movements quickly.

FOR MORE FUN: When you start your month of practice, you might switch out some running practices with a challenging bike ride.

OR

Dance! Choose a favorite song that's at least three minutes long, and make up moves that use your arms, legs, and hips. Dancing can help with cardiovascular endurance and flexibility.

Tip: As you practice in step 5, you could try building up your endurance even more. Once you can dance for the entire song, make the moves harder to do, or choose a longer song.

OR

Work out routine! With a group of friends, try out a class at a local workout or community center, or invite a teacher to show your group a fitness routine you can keep up for your month of practice. They might be able to create a routine that will help all of you reach your goals! You might, also, find a great exercise video to follow, or pick several different ones to keep your workout interesting. Look for aerobic workout videos at the library, through a rental outlet, or online – there are some good websites with free videos (ask an adult to help you find one).

Fun Aerobics Classes: Here are some popular types of workout classes offered at workout and community centers. Which ones sound like they might help you reach your goal?

Zumba is a dance fitness program that uses moves inspired by salsa, samba, and hip-hop dancing to work every muscle group in the body.

Water aerobics (or waterobics) is aerobic exercise that takes place in a swimming pool. Working out in water puts less stress on joints and reduces the risk of injury.

Kickboxing classes create workouts based on martial arts techniques. It combines punching and jabbing arm movements with high kicks. No equipment is required – not even gloves!

Step 3 Build up your strength

Training your muscles to get stronger is another important part of reaching a sports goal. In this step, work with someone to learn three strength exercises that will help you toward your goal. You'll put them into practice in step 5.

CHOOSE ONE:

Work with an older athlete in your sport. Ask her to show you how she trains. Perhaps there's an older Girl Scout who can help you. Ambassadors working toward their coaching badge might be excited to help!

OR

Work with an expert, coach, or community center trainer. Ask them to teach you exercises that will strengthen the muscles you use most in your sport.

OR

Find a video with strength exercises. Watch the instructor closely so you can do the exercises safely and correctly. If you want to watch an online video, team up with an adult to find the right one.

Feed your Muscles

When you work your muscles hard, you need to take good care of them by stretching, cooling down, and eating healthy foods. Foods rich in protein, healthy carbohydrates, and vitamins will help build and fuel muscles. Here are examples of foods you might try:

- Fish
- Eggs
- Fruit
- Milk
- Lean beef, chicken, and turkey
- Nuts
- Cheese
- Vegetables
- Yogurt

Page from the Past Setting up Exercises – *GS Handbook*, 1930

Our bodies are like machines that need frequent oiling and testing to see that all parts are working right.

Or they are like instruments that must be tuned before they are played.

If this is not done, the machinery gets rusty and clogged, or the instrument gets out of tune and makes horrid noises.

That is the way it is with our bodies; our muscles and joints should be bent and stretched every day to take out the kinks and keep them strong and flexible.

The best way is to tune up every morning, for just a few minutes before you put on your clothes, and then again at night, to rest the tired parts and exercise the parts that have not been used so you can even up things.

General Rules Stretch to the very tips of your middle fingers – stretching makes your muscles flexible. 1) Breathe in as arms rise and out as they fall. 2) Stand tall. 3) Sit tall.

Imagine that a string or a straight line is running from your head down to between your ankles.

- 1) Keep limber, don't let your knees grow stiff.
- 2) Sit cross-legged on the floor. Sit on your heels.
- 3) Rise without help from your hands.

Step 4 Drill for skill

A drill is a routine of movements that helps you improve a specific skill. For example, in basketball, you might practice a dribbling drill to perfect your ball-handling skills. Instead of working your whole body, drills help improve one part of your game. In this step, choose a drill specific to your goal!

CHOOSE ONE:

Talk to a coach or gym teacher. Ask them to help you create a drill that improves one part of your game. Show them what your skills are now, and tell them where you want to be in the future so they know what drill will work best.

OR

Work with a friend who likes the same sport. Run each other through a fun drill that helps you both improve. Even if your sports goals aren't the same, working on a variety of skills will help your overall game or competition.

FOR MORE FUN: Keep practicing together – work together in step 5 when you set your practice sessions in motion!

OR

Find a drill in a book or online. Try out the drill with an expert – or watch closely as an expert does it so you understand how it works – before you decide it's the perfect one for you.

Target Ball

Grab a group of friends and practice your footwork! Materials needed: large play space, soccer ball or kickball, 3 cones or targets

Directions: Divide into teams of three. One girl will be the "roller," one the "kicker," and one the "retriever." Set up cones or something else you can use for your targets. (stuffed animal?)

- 1) The roller rolls the ball to the kicker and calls out for which target she's aiming.
- 2) The kicker kicks the ball toward the target. Keep track of how many targets she hits.
- 3) The retriever collects the ball and returns it to the roller.
- 4) After 6 tries, rotate positions. Keep going until everyone has at least one turn as the kicker.

For more challenges: a) Move the roller farther from the kicker; b) Move the kicker farther away from the targets; c) Make targets smaller.

Step 5 Practice, practice, practice!

Now that you have all the parts of a routine to help you practice with the purpose of reaching your goal – endurance, strength, and a drill – make a practice schedule and follow it for one month. You should do each of your parts at least twice a week (do them all at the same time, or at different times – whatever works for you). After one month, do one of the below activities

CHOOSE ONE:

Discuss the process with a coach, friends, or family. What worked for you about the practice, and what would you now do differently? When did you find you needed to remember your purpose to stay motivated?

FOR MORE FUN: Share your sports diary as you chat so you can talk about specifics.

OR

Write a "Top 10 tips for Practicing" list. Review the list you made with your helper in step 1. Then, use your past month's experience to make your own tips, and include short explanations for why you recommend each one.

FOR MORE FUN: Share your list with friends and others who do the sport on which you're working.

OR

Make a short video or photo slideshow about your practice. Show it to Brownies or other Juniors to help inspire them to complete their Athlete badges.

When the Going Gets Tough

Here are some tips on how to keep working when things aren't feeling so great.

- Make small goals for yourself along the way.
- Give yourself rewards for small goals. If you're trying to learn three yoga poses, reward yourself after you have mastered each one.
- Ask a friend or family member to support you and remind you when you get off track.
- Watch sports on TV, and get inspired by how good the professionals are.
- Try something new - if one part of your routine isn't working, don't be scared to switch it up!

So, did you reach your goal? Hooray for you! Way to go. If you didn't, don't worry - that's what practice is all about. Keep up the good work, and try to hit your goal with more time.

Add the Badge to Your Journey

As you are getting your game on, you might, also, collect ideas for a Take Action project. Hints: Are there enough fun, safe places for kids to play and practice in your community? Would families enjoy more chances to come out and play together? Maybe your Take Action project could organize people to make such spaces available!

Now that I've earned this badge, I can give service by:

- Sharing my tips for practicing with other athletes
- Creating a fun obstacle course for Brownies or Daisies
- Helping my family make and reach their fitness goals

I'm inspired to: